

Daniel's Dream and Vision of Four Beasts

Our study is an extraordinary passage of Scripture about both the past and the future. I have to admit that it is amazing what we find in Scripture sometimes. When we first become a believer in Christ, we may think the Bible is about salvation, forgiveness of sin, and going to heaven. But when we start to read and study it, we find there are many things in the Bible that we never expected to find.

As we study, look to discover the unexpected. Have you ever asked yourself why God gave you the Bible and what

another way, there is no one else like our God. Pharaoh had lots of gods. One of the reasons for the plagues was so Pharaoh would know that there is no god like our God. All other gods are demons. Even though they may do some seemingly miraculous things, they are just demons. There is no god like our God.

In Exodus 9:29, we are told that the earth is the Lord's. God wants us to know that the earth is His; He owns it. We need to remember that when thinking about climate change and the environment, that God has it all under His

Daniel's Vision of Four Beasts

Daniel 7:4-7



Daniel 7:4

**Babylonian
Empire**



Daniel 7:5

**Medo-Persian
Empire**



Daniel 7:6

**Empire of
Greece**



Daniel 7:7

**Roman
Empire**

He wants you to know? There are numerous answers to that question. It is not just that we are sinners, and Christ died for our sins so that we can be forgiven and go to heaven. There is more to it than that. Let me give you just some of the reasons.

In Exodus 8:9-10, we discover that God wanted Pharaoh to know that there was no one like Moses' God. Or put it

control. We read in both the major and minor prophets that God controls the weather. Some people believe today they are able to do something to control the weather, but it is God who is in control. Or how about Isaiah 43:8-10? There we are told that God gives us prophecy so that we may know and believe that He is God and understand who He is.

In Matthew 9:6, Jesus did a miracle. He healed a paralytic, and said,

“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” Matthew 9:6 (NASB)

He wanted us to know that He has the authority to forgive sins.

In John 10:38, we are told that Jesus wants us to know that the Father dwells within Jesus, and He is within the Father. Now, the only way that can happen is if they are one and the same. They are the Trinity—something we have difficulty understanding. Scripture teaches it, so we are to believe it.

In John 20:30, we are told,

“Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples . . . John 20:30 (NASB)

The disciples were with Jesus. He did a lot of miracles. We are told by John at the end of verse 30 that “not all of them are written in this book.” Verse 31 is the one I want you to see. It says,

. . . but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. John 20:31 (NASB)

So what is one of the reasons that Scripture is given to us? That we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and that He is the Son of God. We have discovered in previous studies that means He is deity, He is God.

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12 (NASB)

Our sins can only be forgiven through Jesus! Those are some of the reasons that the Scriptures have been given to us.

Daniel surprised us, because Daniel told us that there is another reason that God gave us the Scripture. Turn to Daniel 2:28. Daniel, chapter 2, is a dream about a statue that was given to King Nebuchadnezzar. The statue is about the future. In verse 28 we are told this:

However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries . . . Daniel 2:28a (NASB)

God reveals mysteries. Paul talked about numerous mysteries that God reveals. Notice what he said:

. . . and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. Daniel 2:28b (NASB)

Daniel said, “God has made known to you, King, what the future is going to be, what is going to take place in the future.” As you continue reading through the chapter, you learn the reason God did this was because Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know what the future was all about. Every time I read it, I am amazed at the fact that King Nebuchadnezzar did not believe in the true God. The king was worshiping Marduk along with other gods. He was a polytheist, not a man who worshiped the true God. Here God gave this unbelieving pagan a view of the future—a dream that you and I would have loved to have. But God chose to give it to Nebuchadnezzar. God did that because God wanted him to know the future. God laid it all out and told him what was going to happen.

Look at Daniel 9:22. We are told,

He gave me instruction . . . Daniel 9:22a (NASB)

The angel Gabriel in verse 22 said:

. . . and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. At the beginning of your supplications, the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Daniel 9:22b-23a (NASB)

Daniel wanted an explanation about a subject that showed up in verse 2 of this chapter. It was about Jeremiah and his prophecies regarding the seventy years of captivity. In response, God sent his angel, Gabriel, to tell Daniel what it is all about because God wanted Daniel to know. Notice what the answer is not about. It is not about Jesus or God's plan for man's salvation. Nor is it about whether you are going to heaven or hell. It was information about the future so that both you and Daniel would know.

If you read Daniel 7:19, you discover something else that Daniel was told. Verse 19 of chapter 7 says,

Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet. Daniel 7:19 (NASB)

Finally the information was given to him. Daniel kept wanting to know details about the future and God gave him the information.

The Purpose of Daniel 7. If you ever wondered what the purpose for Daniel 7 is or why we should be interested in Daniel 7, it is simply for our information. The reason God gave us Daniel, chapter 7, is so we could know the future of the world. There is another reason for it: so you can be comforted and have hope about your future. Daniel reveals that God loves us, wants to comfort us, and give us hope. Daniel wanted to know about his future, and in the process, we get to know about our future. Turn with me now to Daniel 7:1 where we will begin. In verse 1 we read:

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it. Daniel 7:1 (NASB)

of Belshazzar.” He had a dream in the first year of Belshazzar. The date is 556 B.C. which is at the beginning of the reign of the last king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Nabonidus. This is not King Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar is the crown prince, who was left in Babylon, and Nabonidus went down to Saudi Arabia. Most historians agree that he was establishing the worship of the moon god there. This takes us back to Daniel 4 in time because chapter 5 is where we learned Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall, and his empire fell to the Medo-Persian Empire. The events of Daniel 7 occurred in time between Daniel 4 and 5, but since this is part of the dreams and visions section, it was placed later in Daniel. I think it is important to understand exactly what this chapter is about and where the events fit in time. This is happening in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, taking us back in time.

Daniel was on his bed and in his dream he saw visions of activity taking place. He then wrote the dream down, providing a summary of it. He does not give us all the details. Some of us really love details. Some of us do not. In Daniel 12:8-9, Daniel tells us why he only gave a summary.

As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?” He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Daniel 12:8-9 (NASB)

Daniel was told not to share everything. Perhaps that is the reason Daniel does not tell us everything but only gives us the big picture.

Four Beasts in Daniel 7. He now relates the following summary of the vision. Verses 2-3 say,

Daniel said, “I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.” Daniel 7:2-3 (NASB)

The first detail to note is that he said, “This is the first year

Did you notice the times the number four occurs in this pas-

sage? The number four is a symbol of the earth that you find throughout the Scriptures. Consider for an example, Psalm 107:3. There you find the number four refers to the east, the west, the north, and the south. If you look at Acts 11:5, you will find the same. There are four different relationships on the earth: the east, the west, the north and the south. In Revelation 7:1, there are two different references to four. Both of them are in connection with angels. This comes after the first six seals. Verse 1 says,

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth . . . Revelation 7:1a (NASB)

Did you notice the number four? Four angels, four corners.

. . . holding back the four winds . . . Revelation 7:1b (NASB)

There is another four.

. . . of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree. Revelation 7:1c (NASB)

It is just amazing, all the fours that show up in the verse. Verse 2 says:

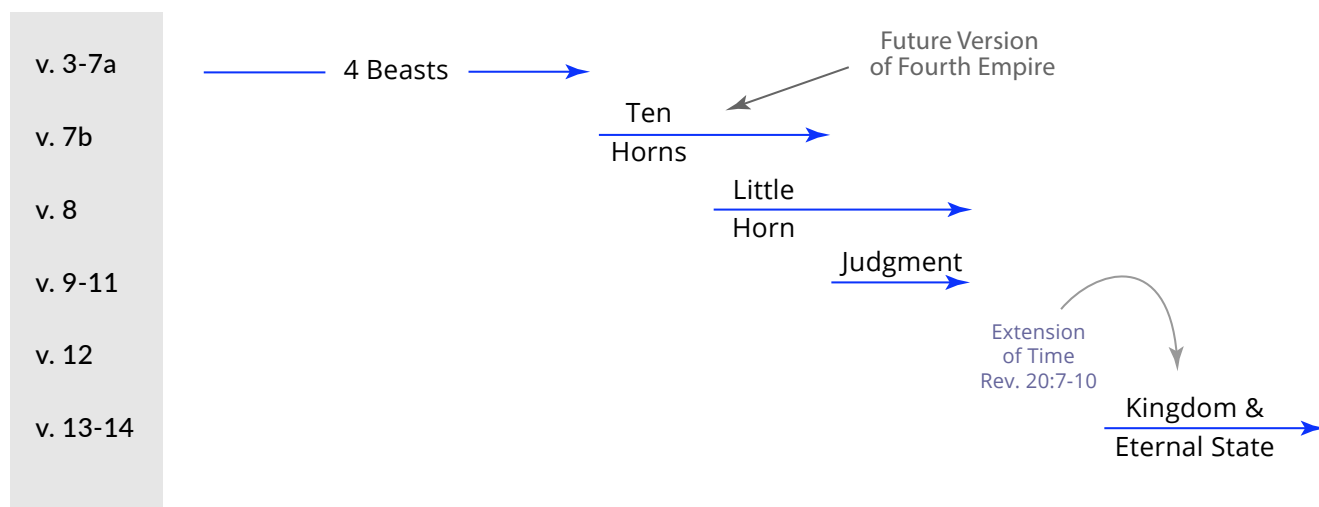
And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea. Revelation 7:2 (NASB)

It is important to see that the four angels are to harm the earth and the sea. Again, the number four deals with the earth. So if you go back now to Daniel 7, we are told that there are four beasts that were coming up from the sea, different from one another. Again, the number is connected to the earth. When it says “from the seas,” if you were to return to Revelation 17:1, you would find out that it actually talks about “waters.” It says,

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.” Revelation 17:1 (NASB)

It speaks of a harlot sitting on the waters. When you read

Dream of Visions in Daniel 7



Revelation, have you ever wondered about the meaning of some of these terms? Verse 15 states what “waters” is all about. It says:

And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” Revelation 17:15 (NASB)

The waters represent people. Revelation interprets itself and helps us to understand the book of Daniel. If you study both the books of Daniel and Revelation, you can understand what is taking place in the book of Revelation. What is the point? Waters refers to people, nations, and tongues. Seas are then water and people. Then we are told in verse 3,

And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.” Daniel 7:3 (NASB)

That is what Daniel saw and is talking about. The question is: what are these four great beasts? Look ahead at verse 15. We are going to jump ahead into the interpretation section, which we will explore more in depth in our study. But I just want to read verses 15 and 16 so that you know who the four great beasts are. It says,

As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking . . . Daniel 7:15-16a (NASB)

Daniel wants to know what is going on, so he just asks and is told. He wants to know the exact meaning of all of this,

. . . him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. Daniel 7:16a-17 (NASB)

What are the four great beasts? They are four kings. We have already seen that if you talk about a king, he has a specific

empire. So when you talk about King Nebuchadnezzar, you understand that he was ruling the Babylonian Empire. Technically, it was the Neo-Babylonian Empire. So when you talk about four great beasts, you are talking about four empires. Daniel is told in verse 3 that there are four great empires coming up out of the sea and each one represents the people in a given empire. They are different from one another.

Babylonian Empire. Now verse 4 gives us our first beast. It says,

The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. Daniel 7:4 (NASB)

There are numerous details in this verse. The first detail is that this beast is like a lion. Let me tell you why this beast is the Babylonian Empire. The first clue is that it is like a lion. If you were able to look at the Babylonian ruins, you would see that lions lined the walls in the city of Babylon. There were at least 120 lions that we know about, on the walls of Babylon, in the palace, and along the processional way which was roughly a half a mile long. It began at the Ishtar Gate. What is amazing about the gate is that there were many lions on the gate. The lion was symbolic of the Babylonian Empire! So when Daniel was told that the first is like a lion, that was the first clue that this beast represented the empire of Babylon, and the king was Nebuchadnezzar. At this point he had died. In Jeremiah 50:17, God ties lions and the empire of Babylon together. So there is an historical connection between this empire and lions. It included the Assyrian Empire. Lions were also a common symbol for the Assyrian Empire as well. The description also mentions it having the wings of an eagle. In the palace of Babylon, there were numerous representations of winged lions. At this point, it is clear he was talking about the Babylonian Empire. Daniel would have known about the lions, and he would have known about the winged lions, because he was still living in the city of Babylon. Belshazzar was the crown prince there in Babylon, and Nabonidus was still the rightful king of the empire. The message was that

Babylon still existed. It had not yet been destroyed. The the winged lions were there, and Daniel made the connection between the symbol of the lions and the city. He knew that this referred to the Babylonian Empire.

Then we are told that his wings are plucked, “and he was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man. A human mind was given to him.” You may wonder what that could possibly represent. If you recall from Daniel, chapter 4, King Nebuchadnezzar was humiliated and made to become like an animal. After a period of time, he was healed and walked upright again. His mind was restored so “a human mind was given to him.”

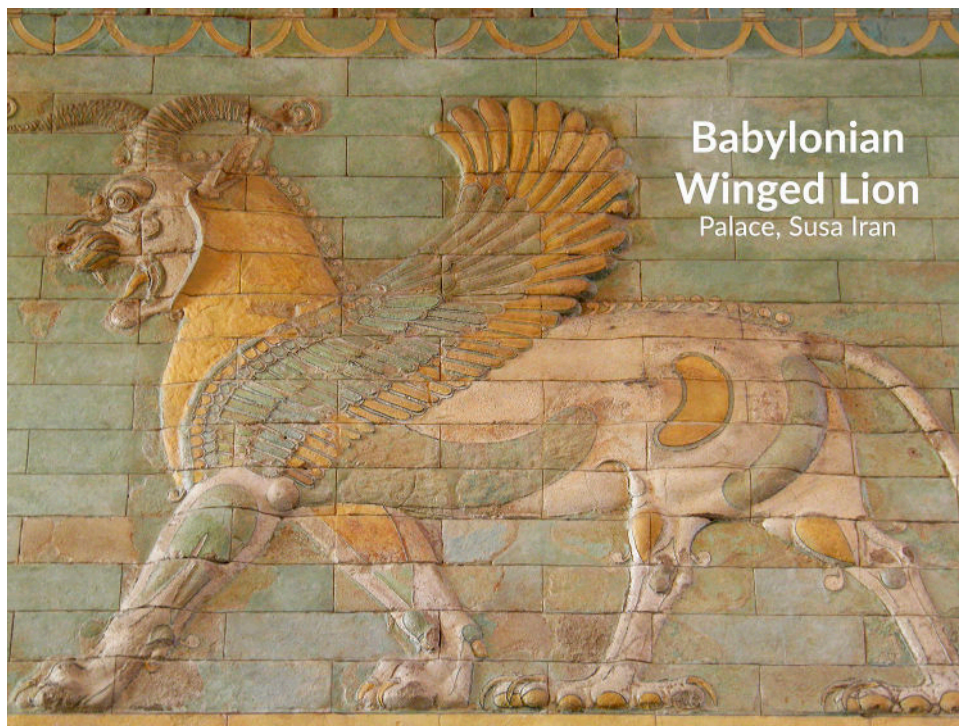
The Babylonian Empire initially began small in size and which exploded into a major empire. Very quickly in 622 B.C., the Assyrian Empire was defeated by the Neo-Babylonian Empire in

Nipore [phonetic] which was southeast of Babylon. Then the Egyptian Empire made an alliance with the Assyrian Empire, and they tried to defeat the Neo-Babylonian Empire. King Nebuchadnezzar came against that alliance in 605 B.C. at two different battles. One was at Carchemish, and then subsequently one was in Hamath. He defeated both the Assyrian Empire and the Egyptian Empire. This enabled King Nebuchadnezzar to extend his empire from Babylon up to the southern part of Turkey, and then down towards Egypt. Its size was magnificent! When this verse describes a winged lion, the wing illustrates that Nebuchadnezzar conquered the territory quickly. That is

the confirming testimony of history. During a following seven-year period, the Neo-Babylonian army did not expand the empire as it had previously done. It connects with what happened to King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 7:5 which introduces the next empire.

Medo-Persian Empire. Verse 5 says,

“And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’” Daniel 7:5 (NASB)



One of the reasons we know it is the Medo-Persian Empire is that we are told there is one side that is raised up. We know from history that the Persian Empire dominated the Medo-Persian Empire. Interestingly enough, history tells us that the Persian Empire made an

alliance initially with the Babylonian Empire in an attempt to defeat the Medes. When the Medes saw the Persian Empire come against it, the army defected and made an alliance with Cyrus the Great, who was the king of the Persian Empire. From there they proceeded to defeat three other empires: the Lydian Empire in 546 B.C., the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C., which is related in Daniel, chapter 5. He went on to defeat the Egyptian Empire in 525 B.C. These three empires are the three ribs. Verse 5 says, “And three ribs were in its mouth, between its teeth, and thus they said to it, ‘Arise and devour much meat.’” This gives us the clues that enable us to identify the Medo-Persian Empire as the next kingdom.



That is really terrific, because this prophecy was given before the fall of the Babylonian Empire to the Medo-Persian Empire. Verse 5 is giving a prophecy that was yet to be fulfilled, and we see in Daniel that it was fulfilled.

Empire of Greece. Verse 6 is the next empire. The Grecian Empire came about as a result of Alexander the Great's efforts. Initially, the Grecian Empire was just Greece itself. Alexander the Great expanded it very quickly all the way over to India, and all the way down to Palestine and Egypt. The sequence was Palestine first, Egypt next, and then all the way over to India. History tell us that Alexander the Great wanted to continue his conquests, but his army rebelled, making it impossible to continue. He died at the age of thirty-three. His conquests were accomplished in just ten years. Now look at verse 6. It says,

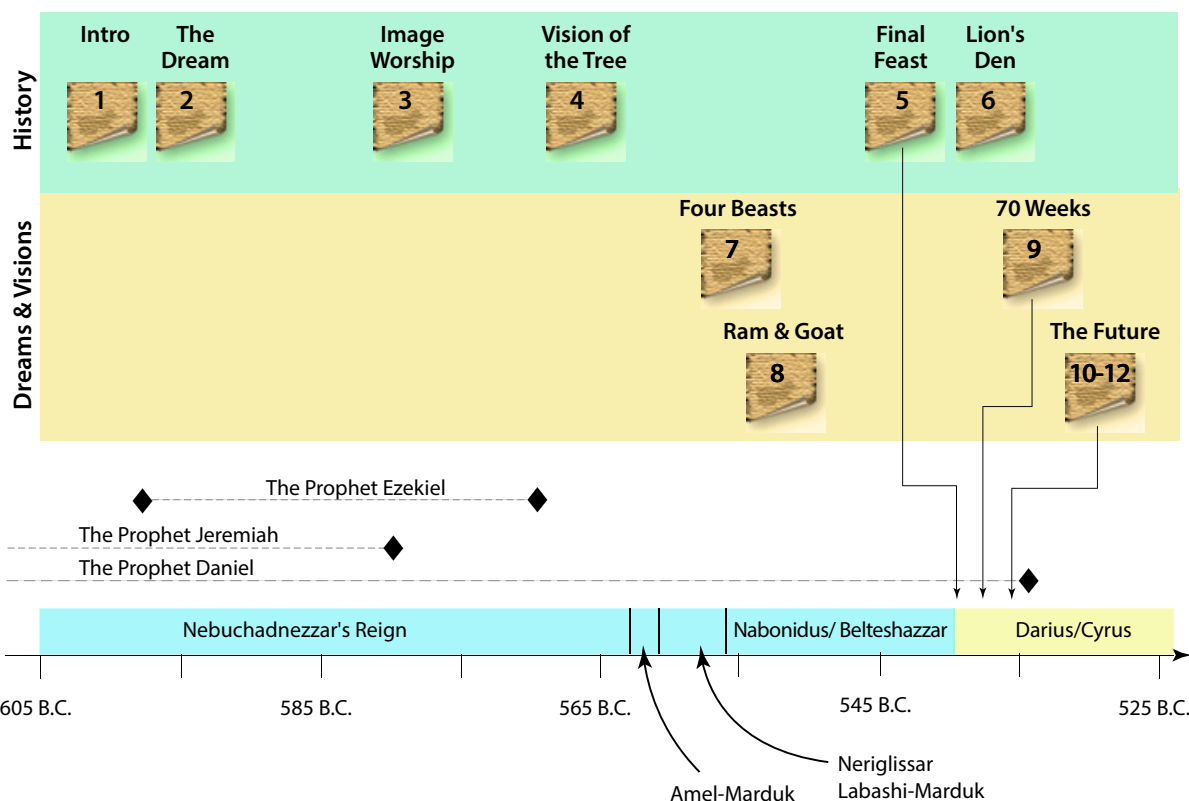
After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird;

the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. Daniel 7:6 (NASB)

This was an extraordinary expansion of territory in a ten-year period—just phenomenal. The symbol for Alexander in verse 4 is “like a leopard,” one of the fastest creatures on the earth. The fastest one, I understand, is the cheetah, 70 miles per hour. But the leopard is also fast at 60 miles per hour. We are told it had wings, just to make the point that this animal is really fast. This is a leopard with wings! This empire expanded very quickly is the point.

Now we will consider the four heads. From Grecian history, we understand that Alexander had four generals. The empire was divided among these four generals following Alexander's death. Lysimachus took Thrace and Asia Minor. Cassander took Greece and Macedonia. Seleucus took what we today call Syria, Babylon, and India. Ptolemy took Palestine and Egypt. Alexander the Great's empire was

Outline of Daniel



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divided into four parts. So when we are told that it has four heads and dominion was given to it, it is unmistakable that the vision is speaking of the empire of Greece.

Roman Empire. Verse 7 is the fourth beast. Verse 7 says,

After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.
Daniel 7:7 (NASB)

This is the longest-ruling empire that we know about—almost 1,500 years. Its territory ran all the way from Great

Britain down to Spain, sweeping all the way across to the Babylonian Empire. It went all the way down to Egypt, sweeping all the way over west, included the northern part of Africa, and for 1,500 years it ruled. This is a good description of the dreadful and terrifying Roman Empire.

Daniel is then told what the ten horns are. Look at verse 24.

As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise . . . Daniel 7:24a (NASB)

Now we know that the ten horns are ten kings. This is really important. Earlier we were told that the four great beasts were four kings. We started with an empire which was divided into four kingdoms. Now we are told that there are ten horns connected to the original empire. That implies a major realign-

ment within the original empire. It is now ruled by ten kings. In Daniel, chapter 2, we learned with regards to the statue that there were legs of iron and feet of clay and iron. The ten toes represented a future version of the Roman Empire. Some Bible scholars have taught this means a revived Roman Empire. I do not like to use that terminology. A better way to describe this future empire is that it will encompass the old territory of the former Roman Empire. I believe that is a more apt description. It is a future empire that will cover the old territory. Whatever that looks like will be revealed in the future. It may be a caliphate.

If we compare Daniel 2 to Daniel 7, we find a very interesting comparison. The head of gold in Daniel's statue in chapter 2 is the winged lion here in Daniel 7. Both of them refer to the Babylonian Empire. The chest of silver in Daniel, chapter 2, is the second kingdom. In Daniel, chapter 7, we are told that it is the humped bear. Both of them represent the Medo-Persian Empire. In Daniel, chapter 2, we see the waist of bronze. In Daniel, chapter 7, it is the winged leopard. Both the waist of bronze and the winged leopard refer to the empire of Greece. In Daniel, chapter 2, we see the legs of iron. In chapter 7, it is the dreadful and terrible beast. Both of them refer to the Roman Empire. Daniel 2 describes the feet of iron and clay with ten toes—or we interpret it as being ten toes. In chapter 7, we are told that it is ten kings, and both of them are a future version of an empire. If you are interested as to why it is a future empire, I encourage you to listen to our messages from Daniel, chapter 2. We took four messages to lay out the reasons why we believe that the ten kings or the ten toes are a future version of the empire. It is important that we understand it as taking place in the future—otherwise, it has already occurred. If it has already occurred, we will have a problem in the next verses coming up. We will point that out shortly.

What we have now are two different portraits of the future. Both Daniel chapters 2 and 7 provide information about the future. Daniel 2 is like the big picture. Daniel 7 gives you a second picture with a lot of details in it. This study is laying out the big picture. We are connecting the two so you can see they both describe the same events. The study that follows will provide many details that were

not given to us in chapter 2. For example, it will cover the Antichrist, the Rapture, and the second coming of Christ. But now let us continue with the overview.

The Little Horn. Verse 8:

While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it . . . Daniel 7:8a (NASB)

While the ten kings are ruling, another king comes to power. We are told,

. . . and behold, this horn . . . Daniel 7:8b (NASB)

That is, a king, or empire, or nation ...

. . . possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts. Daniel 7:8c (NASB)

I call him “the boastful horn.” Verse 9:

*“I kept looking
Until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;
His vesture was like white snow
And the hair of His head like pure wool.
His throne was ablaze with flames,
Its wheels were a burning fire.”
Daniel 7:9 (NASB)*

I just like the description! The hair of His head is pure wool, and His vesture or clothing is like white snow. Think about this for a minute. The Ancient of Days is seated, and He is dressed in white. His hair is like pure wool. His throne is ablaze with flames. There are wheels on the throne, and they are like burning fire.

Verses 10-11 add,

*“A river of fire was flowing
And coming out from before Him;*

Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;
The court sat,
And the books were opened.
Then I kept looking because of the sound of the
boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept
looking until the beast was slain, and its body was
destroyed and given to the burning fire. Daniel
7:10-11 (NASB)

What an unbelievable picture! These verses are describing judgment on the Antichrist. This boastful horn is the Antichrist. What is being described when it says “the books were opened,” is God’s judgment on the Antichrist. The books contained all of his wicked, evil deeds that he did, justifying the judgment that was going to come on him as described in verse 11. We will get more into that in our next study. All I want to do today is give you the big picture. Verse 12 says,

As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time. Daniel 7:12 (NASB)

We will talk about the extension of time in the next study. Now verses 13 and 14 summarize the dream. We are just getting through the dream today. Details follow in the next study. Verses 13 and 14 say,

I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.
And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every
language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one

Which will not be destroyed.
Daniel 7:3-14 (NASB)

Can you imagine the excitement that must have been in Daniel as he saw this dream?! He is also at this point confused because he does not know what all the symbols mean. The rest of the chapter is an explanation of the dream.

Conclusion. I want you to consider three things. The first is that the book of Daniel reveals the past and the future. That tells us that our Father is kind and merciful, because He did not need to tell us these things. He chose to tell us. The book of Daniel also tells us that the past prophecies in the book came true. So by giving us the prophecies, we can look back in time. We can see that Daniel accurately predicted what was going to happen. That tells us that the word of God is not only true, but we can trust Him also. That speaks to His character. All of these fulfilled prophecies speak to and illustrate the character of our God.

The last point is that the eternal kingdom is literal and future. I have not yet made that point about the future kingdom, but did you notice that the empire of Babylon was real? The Medo-Persian Empire proved in time to be a real empire. The Grecian Empire came in time to be a historic, earthly empire. The Roman Empire rose up in time in the pages of earth’s history. All of these proved the accuracy of Daniel’s prophecies and the faithfulness of God.

Then we are told in Daniel 2 that the next kingdom was a mountain. There is an empire that will continue forever. That will be a real, literal, earthly empire also. We will talk more about what that means next time. But the point is this: the eternal kingdom is literal and future, and the Father gives us hope. That tells me about His character. The fact that there is a real, eternal kingdom for believers gives me hope and comfort to go through my struggles and trials on this earth. It gives me hope for the future and reason to persevere. Let us pray.